CYCLE OF LIFE

843 Birth.- Woman knew she was pregnant when menstrual periods stopped; during her pregnancy she "worked hard, climbed mts.; if she stayed in the house she'd get fat and the baby wouldn't [262] move" (FP). During last month of pregnancy woman ate no meat, very little salt; if she ate meat then, her husband would fail to see deer when hunting (SM). Some husbands did not kill any animal or eat meat when wife pregnant; others did so. One man "killed a fox by smashing its head, while his wife was pregnant; the baby was [845] born without any eyes or nose. Another time that same man killed a king snake when his wife was carrying a baby; the baby was born with a king-snake mark across its chest" (FP). Husband could have intercourse with wife during period of pregnancy. Sudden fright during pregnancy caused miscarriages; FP, LT said some babies born at 8th month, but expressed surprise when 7-months babies mentioned.

844 Older woman, usually a relative, attended woman in labor; husband often assisted, sometimes attended wife if no woman relative available. Husband or attendant dug shallow trench about 3 ft. long, either inside or outside living house, depending on weather; fire built in bottom of trench, slabs of stone laid on top of fire, then layers of earth, tule mats on top of stones. Woman in labor lay on top of this trench (to mist); during childbirth knelt, grasping [171] vertical stick; attendant pushed baby down onto mat on ground as among Surprise Valley Paiute (Kelly, 158). Woman stuffed her hair in her mouth to prevent vomiting as baby emerged. To prevent breech presentation, if this expected, woman held suspended head downward; baby righted itself inside womb and would be born head first (FP). In [789] protracted labor person possessing amulet containing supernatural power might be called on to rub amulet over parturient's body (see Autobiography of FP).

Mother of baby pulled out afterbirth, cut cord and tied it about 3 in. from navel, with native twine; cord usually dropped off after 8 days; was saved by mother and kept wrapped in buckskin. Newborn baby washed in plain warm water by attendant and wrapped in soft deerskin, wildcatskin blanket. Maternal grandmother of infant buried afterbirth outside house.

846 After birth mother and infant lay on mat over [853] hot trench for 6 days. First 2 days baby fed thin gruel made of water, acorn or piñon meal, from mother's fingers; mother milked out colostrum for ca. 2 days, baby nursed on third day. If mother had no milk she rubbed her breasts with soaproot brush dipped in warm water to induce [262] flow. For one month she drank only warm water, "else her blood would get thick and she'd die" (FP); ate no meat, salt or grease as these foods would get into her milk and make baby sick (FP); if she ate meat husband would not be able to see deer (SM).

[p. 45(a)]